

Visitation Plan with the Child(ren) in Placement

Visitation plays a significant role in reuniting children with their families through reassurance of continued contact and maintenance of the bond between parents and children.

The Importance of Visiting

- 1) Visiting maintains family relationships and essential connections;
 - Provides family members the opportunity to interact and experience being together;
 - Provides siblings placed separately the opportunity to continue their relationships;
 - Helps parents stay current with the changing developmental needs of their children.
- 2) Visiting enhances children's well-being in placement;
 - Reassures children that their parents want to see them and have not abandoned them;
 - Helps children experience and work through feelings stirred by the separation, thus allowing them to continue their developmental tasks.
- 3) Visiting empowers parents;
 - Provides parents the opportunity to provide supervision for their children and to make decisions regarding their care;
 - Allows family members to experience parents as continuing in the parenting role;
 - Increases parents' participation in problem identification and service planning as they define the aspects of the role they are successful with and those that require skill development.
- 4) Visiting helps family members face reality;
 - Prevents children from developing "fantasy parents" - an overly idealized or overly negative image of their parents;

- Helps parents experience the ambivalence they feel about the parenting role generally or about parenting a specific child;
 - Helps parents and children face the parents' willingness and/or ability to make the changes required to provide a safe home for their children and the children's willingness and ability to live with their parents.
- 5) Visiting assures opportunities to learn, practice, and demonstrate new behaviors and patterns of interaction;
- Allows parents to practice and improve the parenting skills they are learning in parenting classes or counseling sessions;
 - Allows caseworkers, foster parents, homemakers, therapists and/or others to teach child care and demonstrate ways of setting and enforcing limits while parents and children are together;
 - Allows family members to develop, practice and demonstrate different ways of interacting and communicating;
- 6) Visiting facilitates family assessment;
- Allows for observations of family members. It is easy to rely on information concerning the parents' use of services to determine whether progress is being made. However, it is essential that decisions as to whether and when families can be reunified be based on specific behavioral changes related to the reason for placement, not on whether parents have complied with services. Direct observations of visits provide information concerning family problems that must be resolved before reunification, changes that family members are making, and feelings that family members experience when they are together.
 - Allows for identification of behaviors and situations that must be addressed in the protection plan in place at reunification.
 - Allows for assessment not only of the feasibility of reunification, but also of the timing of return, and for plans regarding whether all children return at once or in sequence, for example, which child can most safely return first, etc.
 - Allows for documentation that supports the decision to reunify the family or supports a change in the permanent plan.

- 7) A progressive visiting plan provides the transition necessary for successful reunification;
- Allows for a progression from supervised parent-child contact to unsupervised daytime, then overnight, then extended visits which approximate the increasing responsibility the parents will have for the child following reunification.
 - Allows through this progression the identification and resolution of problems that occur as parents and children are together for longer periods of time.
 - Allows family members, including siblings, to adjust to the changes in the family system that occur as children re-enter the family.
 - Allows foster parents and others to actively support children and their parents as the stresses of reunification are identified and experienced.
- 8) When the goal is not reunification, visiting helps family members cope with changing or ending relationships;
- Helps children understand why they will not be able to return home, the nature of future family relationships and the ways through which they can maintain their connections to family members.
 - Provides opportunities for family members to experience and express feelings about the changes in relationships. This contributes to the grieving and healing process.
 - Provides children the option to maintain family relationships that may support them as they enter adulthood.

MEMORANDA HISTORY: